

L&PS New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety

Division of Gaming Enforcement

Office of the Attorney General

David Samson, Attorney General

Thomas N. Auriemma, Acting Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 22, 2002

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kerry Hand, DGE, (609) 441-2533, Pager # (609) 229-2198

Hilton Casino Security Guards Arrested on Drug Charges

TRENTON - Attorney General David Samson and Division of Gaming Enforcement Acting Director Thomas Auriemma today announced the arrest of three Hilton Casino security guards for selling marijuana to other employees on the casino's premises.

Kenneth Pratt, 42, of Moorestown, Angel Garcia, 19, of Atlantic City, and Joseph Bettencourt, 21, also of Atlantic City, were arrested at Hilton Casino by State Police assigned to DGE at 10:40 p.m., March 21, and charged with distribution of a controlled dangerous substance. Another individual, Donald Thomas Jr., 19, of Pleasantville, was arrested March 5 on the same charge. Thomas is a former Hilton security guard. If convicted, the suspects face up to five years in prison. All were released on their own recognizance. DGE will take immediate action to suspend the suspects' casino licenses that were granted by the Casino Control Commission.

State Police assigned to DGE began investigating the employees after Hilton officials notified State Police that some Hilton employees might be selling illegal drugs. Hilton officials then cooperated with the State Police in the investigation, which ultimately resulted in the arrest of the individuals. The investigation is still ongoing.

Hilton is one of Atlantic City's 12 casino properties and employs more than 3,000 people.

An arrest is based on probable cause and all defendants are presumed innocent until or unless proven guilty.

###